



An Education Policy Handbook On How We Can Bring

Quality Education To **EVERY KID** In Georgia

GEORGIA
—CENTER FOR—
OPPORTUNITY

Removing barriers to ensure that every person — no matter their race, past mistakes, or the circumstances of their birth — has access to a **quality education**, fulfilling work, and a healthy family life.

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INTRODUCTION

Most parents and students will access education through their local public schools. While this option is great for many kids, we still have an obligation to ensure that all kids have access to quality education—including the students who aren't thriving in public schools.

Georgia's Education Challenge

Georgia is a diverse state with a diverse set of needs for education. For many families, traditional public schools are a good fit. But over 500,000 Georgia kids are forced to attend schools we would never want to send our own kids to—schools that have received a performance grade of D or F directly from the state.¹ Furthermore, there's enormous pressure on public schools to meet needs that they are not designed or equipped to address. Parents are increasingly dissatisfied with this one-size-fits-all education model—so much so that one in five families switched schools between March 2020 and May 2022.²

Providing a good education to every child is essential to ensuring that individuals, families, and communities can thrive. It's key to our state's economic prosperity and to cultivating a healthy, cooperative society. Students who successfully complete high school tend to have higher lifetime earnings than their peers, better health, more involvement in their communities, decreased mortality rates, fewer criminal records, and lower teen pregnancy rates.³ With so much at stake, a child's zip code should not determine the quality of their education.

¹ <https://schoolgrades.georgia.gov/school-search>

² https://www.publiccharters.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11/NAPCS_Enrollment-20221115-Web-Single.pdf

³ <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/high-school-graduation#cit4>

What's the Path Forward?

Improving education is a non-negotiable for the future of our state and our kids. Regardless of our individual perspectives and backgrounds, we likely all agree that every child should be able to immediately access the education option that's best for them.

Georgia's elected leaders have an incredible opportunity to shape a more modern, equitable education system that considers every child's unique situation, gives families access to both public schools and alternatives, and—perhaps most importantly—puts the choice of these options in parents' hands. More choice in education is a win-win for everyone: It expands opportunities for all families, not just those who can afford to make a choice, and states with robust choice programs achieve better academic outcomes for all students, including those in the public school system.⁴

This guide is designed to give Georgia's citizens a better understanding of the state's education policy landscape and which levers can be pulled so that students living everywhere in our state receive a quality education that enables them to succeed in school, in the workplace, and in life.

4 https://www.blackmindsmatter.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SUFS-White-Paper-V7_FINAL-1.pdf



OVERVIEW OF GEORGIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Georgia's 2,200+ public schools serve over 1.7 million students. Of those students, at least 500,000 kids are in public schools that have received grades "D" or "F" from the state.

Georgia's School System by the Numbers

Source: Georgia Department of Education

219 total school systems

- 159 county systems
- 21 independent city school systems
- 29 state and commission charter schools
- 3 state schools
- 181 local schools districts
- Largest School District: Gwinnett County (175,000 students)
- Smallest School District: Taliaferro County (less than 200 students)
- 14 districts serve fewer than 1,000 students
- 6 systems serve 50,000+ students

Who Manages Our Public Schools?

State Level

- The State Superintendent is the administrative head of the Department of Education. The position is filled via statewide election every four years.
- The State Board of Education (SBOE) is a group of 14 members who represent each of Georgia’s congressional districts and set the policies and regulations for Georgia’s public education system. They are appointed by the Governor and serve seven-year terms.

Local Level

- School districts are managed by locally elected boards of education.

How Are Georgia’s Public Schools Funded?

Georgia’s student funding formula was created in 1985 through the Quality Basic Education Act, and no major reforms have been made since then. Funding for public school students comes from three sources.⁵

- 47% State budget
- 44.9% Local funds, such as property and sales taxes
- 8.1% Federal government

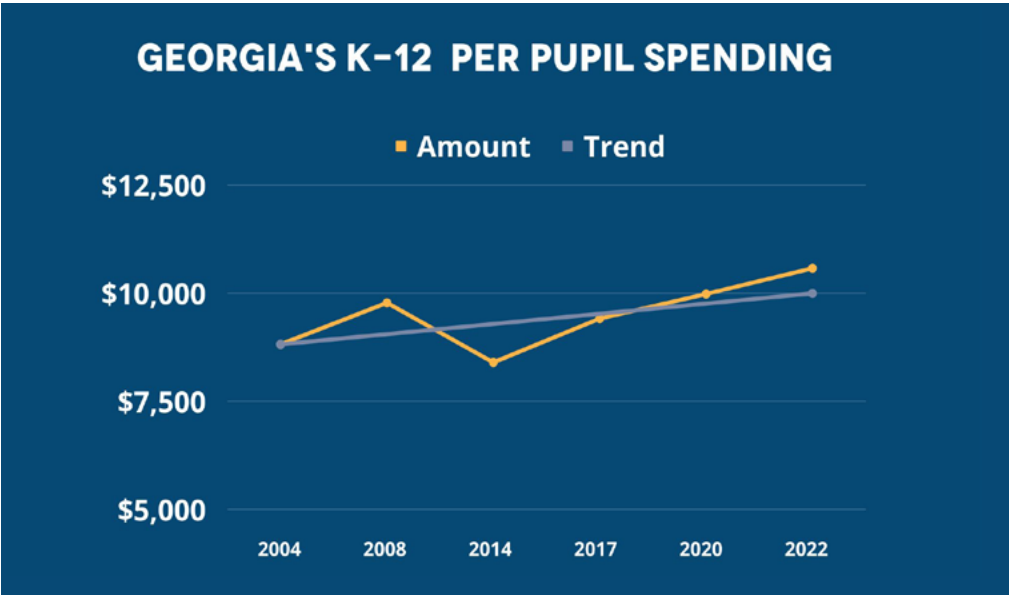
Public School Funding Facts⁶

- Georgia K-12 schools spend \$11,203 per pupil annually.
- K-12 education accounts for 35% of the state budget.⁷
- When measured as a percentage of personal income, Georgia ranks 34th in education spending.
- Georgia ranks 36th in education funding.

Per-Pupil Public School Funding Over Time

Despite the growth of school choice options over the years, Georgia’s K-12 spending per pupil has trended upward.

5 <https://www.gadoe.org/Finance-and-Business-Operations/Financial-Review/Pages/School-System-Financial-Information.aspx>
6 <https://educationdata.org/public-education-spending-statistics#georgia>
7 Governor’s Budget Report Fiscal Year 2024



How Is Student Achievement Measured?

Georgia Milestones

The Georgia Milestones Assessment System is a summative assessment system for students from third grade through high school. It measures how well students have mastered the knowledge and skills included in state content standards across core subjects of English/ Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science and social studies. Since the federal law requires that states administer assessments in these areas as well, the Georgia Milestones are designed to serve both the federal and state requirements, reducing the number of assessments students must take overall.

GEORGIA MILESTONES

	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies
End-of-Grade	Grades 3-8	Grades 3-8	Grades 5 & 8*	Grade 8
End-of-Course	American Literature & Composition	Algebra I / Coordinate Algebra	Biology	U.S. History

**High school physical science (Grade 8 only)*

College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)

This index is a yearly statewide measurement for Georgia schools. It scores school districts on how well they are preparing students for college and careers by considering several factors: content mastery, student progress, student performance gaps, readiness for the next levels of education, and high school graduation rates. The CCRPI is calculated by the Georgia Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education.

The latest CCRPI Report for your district is available at <https://www.gadoe.org/CCRPI/Pages/default.aspx>.

What Happens if a Public School Fails to Demonstrate Student Achievement?

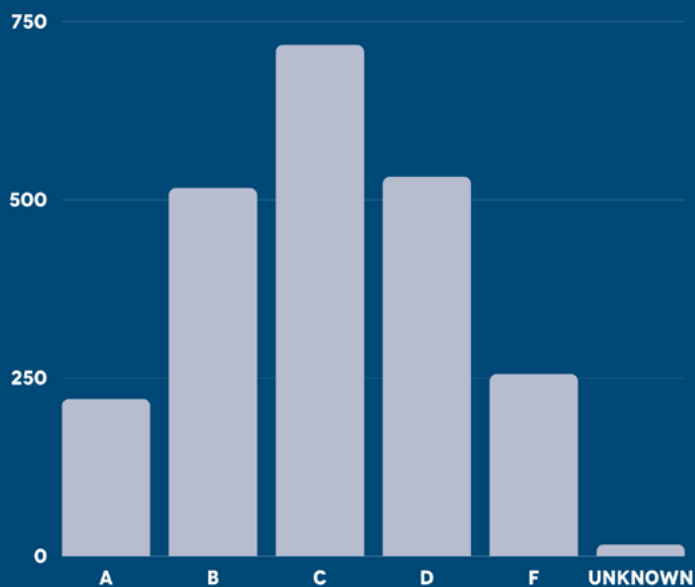
When it comes to academic accountability, the CCRPI and Georgia Milestones give school leaders and policymakers substantial data to know whether a public school is helping students succeed. While the data provides much-needed insight on school performance, it is not tied to any enforced consequences for under-performing schools.



OVERVIEW OF GEORGIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

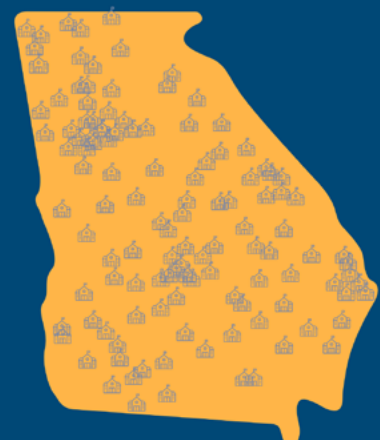
Public School Report Card

NUMBER OF GEORGIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
GRADED A-F (2019)



Source: Georgia Department of Education

THESE UNDERPERFORMING
SCHOOLS ARE SCATTERED ALL
ACROSS THE STATE OF GEORGIA



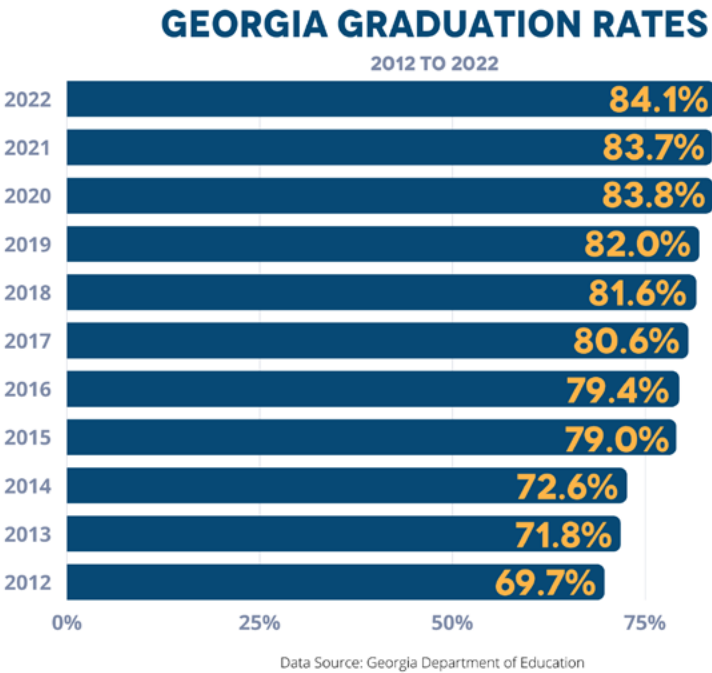
VISIT [EVERYKID.INFO](https://www.everykid.info)
TO SEE WHICH SCHOOLS RECEIVED A "D" OR "F" GRADE

This map is simply an illustration of the distribution of underperforming schools.

Graduation Rates

In 2022, Georgia's graduation rate was 84.1%,⁸ approximately two percent lower than the national graduation rate average (87%).⁹

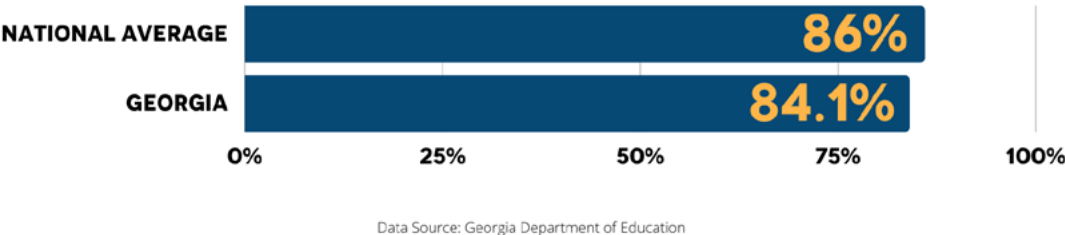
While graduation rates have risen over the past decade, there remains a question of how well those graduates are prepared for college, careers, and adult life. Of the students who graduated in 2022, 6.4% need English remediation and 20% need math remediation when they get to college.¹⁰



Georgia’s Performance on the Nation’s Report Card

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also referred to as “the nation’s report card,” tracks American students’ proficiency in core subjects and is considered the most accurate assessment for comparing student achievement across states. NAEP assessments evaluate student proficiency in math, reading, and science at the levels of fourth grade and eighth grade.

GEORGIA GRADUATION RATE VS. NATIONAL AVERAGE



GEORGIA’S 2022 NAEP SCORES ¹¹



8 <https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?PressView=default&pid=996>

9 <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/average-graduation-rate-stats/national-data>

10 <https://hsgrad.gosa.ga.gov/noauth/extensions/HighSchoolGradOutcomes/HighSchoolGradOutcomes.html>

11 <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

FIVE WAYS GEORGIA CAN GIVE EVERY KID A QUALITY EDUCATION

Education Savings Accounts

CURRENTLY NOT AVAILABLE IN GEORGIA

What Are Education Savings Accounts?

The ability to personalize our choices and experiences has become an expected norm across many facets of life. Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) make it possible to bring a similar level of personalization into K-12 education. Education Savings Accounts allow parents to have their child's per-pupil education funding deposited into a restricted account so they can spend it directly on education opportunities and resources for their child's unique learning needs.

ESAs give states a way to break free of a narrow, one-size-fits-all education model. Instead, ESAs help shape a more modern, diverse education system—one that makes room for both public schools and non-public school options for kids who need different learning environments to thrive.



What Can Parents Do With an ESA?

With ESAs, parents have greater flexibility to create a customized education for their child because they can use the funds to pay for various combinations of education resources—everything from tuition for a non-public school to extra tutoring to educational therapy and dozens of options in between. Qualifying education expenses can include:

- Tuition for private schools, vocational programs, and college
- Online classes
- Tutoring
- Homeschool curriculum
- Standardized testing fees
- Adaptive or assistive technologies for students with special needs
- Educational therapies
- School supplies, such as uniforms and textbooks
- Transportation costs



“Education Savings Accounts step far beyond other school choice programs by fully putting parents in the driver’s seat when it comes to their child’s education. The funds could be used for private-school tuition, but there is added flexibility depending on each family’s unique needs, extending to paying for things like tutoring, specialized therapies, or homeschool co-ops. Passing ESAs would put Georgia at the forefront nationally of giving all children the opportunity for a great education.”
– Buzz Brockway



ESAs Across the States

Between 2011 and 2023, 10 states have adopted some form of an ESA program.

2011: Arizona, Empowerment Scholarship Accounts — Provides scholarships ranging from \$6,400-\$7,000, with special needs students often qualifying for more. The program is open to every student statewide, and 30,471 students are participating in 2023.

2014: Florida, Family Empowerment Scholarship Program — Per-pupil scholarship amount varies by grade and other variables. Ten percent of students are eligible statewide, and as of 2021, 18,585 students were participating.

2015: Mississippi, Equal Opportunity for Students with Special Needs — Provides scholarships of \$6,779, and eligibility is limited to students with special needs (6% of students statewide). As of fall 2022, 390 students were participating.

2017: Tennessee, Individualized Education Account Program — Open to K-12 students who have an Individualized Education Plan and a diagnosed learning disability (2% of students statewide). As of 2021, the average account value was \$7,068, and 307 students participated.

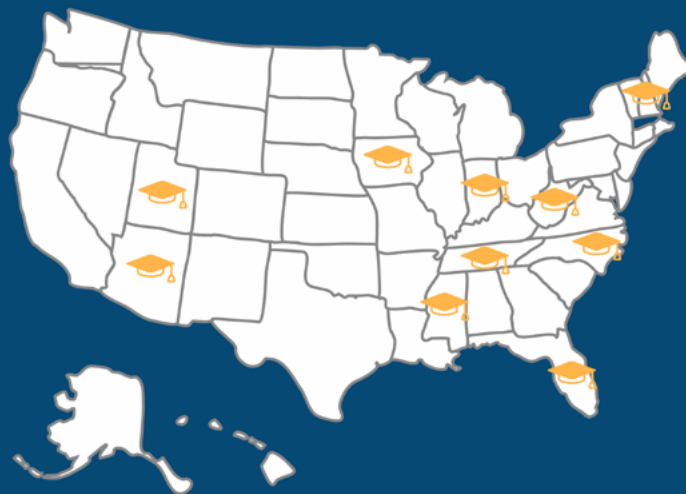
2021: Indiana, Education Scholarship Account Program — Open to students with special needs who come from households earning at or below a threshold income of \$154,013 for a family of four (300% of the federal free-and-reduced-price lunch program). Fourteen percent of Indiana students are eligible, and in 2022-2023, the program has 144 participating students receiving average account values of \$12,049.

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS ACROSS THE STATES

10 STATES HAVE ESA PROGRAMS:

ARIZONA	NEW HAMPSHIRE
FLORIDA	NORTH CAROLINA
INDIANA	TENNESSEE
IOWA	UTAH
MISSISSIPPI	WEST VIRGINIA

WILL GEORGIA BE THE NEXT STATE
TO BRING QUALITY EDUCATION TO
EVERY KID?



2021: New Hampshire, Education Freedom Account Program — Limited to students from households earning an income less than or equal to 300% of the federal poverty level (\$83,250 for a family four in 2022-2023). In 2022, the program included 3,110 students and distributed \$4,684 per account on average.

2021: North Carolina, Personal Education Student Accounts for Children with Disabilities — Gives students with special needs up to \$9,000 for educational expenses, including private school tuition and therapeutic services. Students may attend a public school part-time and receive a partial award up to \$4,500.

2021: West Virginia, Hope Scholarship Program — Open to students who have prior attendance at a public school (93% of students statewide). The scholarship amounts are capped at 100% average per-pupil aid. In 2022-2023, scholarship amounts were set at \$4,298.60.¹²

2023: Iowa, Education Savings Account Program — Provides annual scholarships of \$7,598 to K-12 students statewide (both public and private school students) with no income limits.

2023: Utah, Utah Fits All Scholarship Program — Provides scholarships of \$8,000 per year to K-12 students (both public and private school students) statewide. Parents who want to keep their kid in a public school can apply for a partial scholarship of up to \$4,000. The program is capped at 5,000 recipients for the first year.

ESA Facts:¹³

- 10 states have ESA programs.
- Two states adopted ESAs in 2023: Iowa and Utah.
- As of 2022, 30,992 students across the United States are using ESAs.
- Arizona was the first state to launch an ESA program in 2011.
- Arizona and Utah have the largest ESA programs, with eligibility extending to 100% of students.

¹²
¹³

<https://www.hopescholarshipwv.com/FAQ>

<https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/fast-facts/>



Who Benefits from ESAs?

Students

ESAs make it possible for every student to receive an education that's customized to their unique learning needs and prepares them for good careers, positive participation in their communities, and a fulfilling life. If a traditional public school is the ideal option, great! Public schools aren't going away, and many families will still want to access education that way. ESAs provide a hopeful alternative to families who need education options beyond what a public school may provide.

Students With Special Needs

Students with special needs often succeed academically when they have specialized learning environments and more one-on-one attention—support that public schools are frequently too stretched to provide. When states create Education Savings Accounts, they increase parents' access to hope to consider other options and a way to afford quality, customized education.

Parents

ESAs empower parents with the hope and financial resources to find a better schooling option when the local public school is not meeting their child's unique needs. ESAs are an especially powerful solution for helping students who have experienced learning loss throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. When a traditional public school is working, however, parents can rest assured that ESAs will not take public school funding away and will likely increase public schools' ability to improve their budgets and student success.¹⁴

Low-Income Families

ESAs are one of the most equitable vehicles of school choice. The most robust ESA programs are universal, meaning that every student in the state is eligible to apply and receive the same funding amount. This model gives students from low-income families the same access to schooling options as families who have greater financial resources. In Arizona, for example, the three school districts with the greatest number of ESA students have child poverty rates more than double the state average.¹⁵

Public Schools

ESAs relieve public schools of the burden to accommodate every unique learning style and situation. When ESAs exist, public schools are empowered to boost student achievement because they can focus on delivering the best possible education to the kids who thrive in that environment. They also tend to see improvement in their budgets.¹⁶

Education Entrepreneurs

With ESAs, parents have the flexibility to consider specialized education formats and tools. This flexibility opens doors for education entrepreneurs to create services and solutions that meet parents' demand for unique education offerings—especially in areas where few choices might currently exist.

¹⁴ <https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/policy-report/az-esa/>

¹⁵ <https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/policy-report/esas-help-low-income-families/>

¹⁶ <https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/policy-report/az-esa/>

Our Communities

Ultimately, we all benefit from giving every kid access to the type of education best suited to them. More education choice leads to happier, healthier kids, which in turn leads to communities that are full of opportunity and bright futures.

Next Steps for Georgia: Establish Education Savings Accounts

Unlike several neighboring states, Georgia does not have an established ESA program. Georgia lawmakers can help all Georgia kids, especially those underserved by their local public school, by adopting the modern educational approach that's sweeping the country: Education Savings Accounts.



Charter Schools

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO A LIMITED NUMBER OF GEORGIA STUDENTS

What Are Charter Schools?

Georgia's charter schools are public schools governed by nonprofit boards. They agree to certain student achievement outcomes and increased accountability in exchange for exemptions from many state and local regulations.

Georgia voters authorized the Georgia General Assembly to create charter schools and the State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC) when they passed the Georgia Charter Schools Amendment in 2012. Charter schools are authorized by local school boards or by the State Charter Schools Commission. These authorizers approve and renew charters, monitor charter schools' performance, ensure their compliance with state and federal law, and enforce the terms of the charter.

Next Steps for Georgia: Equitably Fund Charter Schools

Unpredictable, unequal funding is a significant barrier to charter schools' success. Despite being public schools themselves, charter schools don't receive any local funding through property taxes or education sales taxes.¹⁷ As a result, they are funded at a lower level than traditional public schools, and funding levels can vary widely across individual school districts. Georgia does have a charter school supplement, which has made the funding gap smaller in recent years.

Charter schools are also not typically given a facility. As a result, charter schools must use a large percentage of their per-student funding on facility costs, straining student funding that is already more limited when compared to traditional public schools.

In 2017, the Georgia General Assembly created a charter schools facilities grant to address this challenge, but because it has not been fully funded each year, the grant hasn't achieved its full impact. In 2021, the grant was limited to \$40,000 per eligible charter school. Full funding would be \$100,000 per school.

Facility grants to public charter schools allow charters to direct more of their dollars where they matter most—to students, not buildings. Georgia lawmakers can make this possible by fully funding facility grants to public charter schools.

Charter School Facts (2020-2022)¹⁸

- Total number of Georgia kids in charter schools: 60,039 (3.6% of total public school population)

¹⁷
¹⁸

<https://scsc.georgia.gov/resources-guidance/guidance/state-charter-funding>
<https://gacharters.org/get-the-facts/charter-school-enrollment-numbers-in-ga/>

- Total number of charter schools operating in Georgia: 90
- Students waitlisted: 14,000+
- In 2020, Georgia spent less on charter school students: \$8,740 on average per charter school student (in-person and virtual) compared to \$11,203 on average per traditional public school student.¹⁹

Student Eligibility Requirements

- Students must live within the school system of the charter school.
- If a charter school has an attendance zone, enrollment preference is given to students living in those zones. If space is still available, the charter school can open enrollment to students outside the attendance zone.
- If charter schools receive more applications than they have open seats, state law requires a lottery to determine which students will be admitted.

School Options

- Some Georgia school systems have multiple charter school options, while others do not have any.
- Georgia also has multiple online charter schools open to students who live anywhere in the state.

A list of charter schools is available at:

<https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Approved-Charter-Schools.aspx>

Charter School Funding

The state funds charter schools approved by the SCSC, based on a calculation that prevents schools from receiving more than the statewide average funding, even if the students they serve come from districts where charter schools earned significantly more money. As a result, the SCSC is often not a viable option for charter schools attempting to serve students from high-cost districts across the state. In some metro areas, the funding gap for students attending traditional public schools compared with those attending public charter schools is \$5,000+ per pupil.

Costs to Families

- No tuition cost. As public schools, charters have open enrollment and do not charge tuition.
- Some charter schools do not provide transportation.

School Accountability

The State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia reviews charter schools and holds them accountable for their performance. If a charter school does not meet its academic standards or other terms of its contract, the school is not eligible to renew, and it closes.²⁰

¹⁹ <https://scsc.georgia.gov/resources-guidance/guidance/state-charter-funding>
²⁰ <https://scsc.georgia.gov/state-charter-school-performance/scsc-comprehensive-performance-framework/operational>

Tax Credit Scholarship For Private Schools

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO A LIMITED NUMBER OF GEORGIA STUDENTS

What Are Tax Credit Scholarships?

Created in 2008, the Georgia Tax Credit Scholarship Program creates a public-private partnership that incentivizes businesses and individuals to invest directly in K-12 education. Through the program, individuals and corporations donate toward private school scholarships so that more students can access private schools as a viable education option. They receive a dollar-for-dollar credit against their state income tax liability for donating to Student Scholarship Organizations (SSOs) that provide these scholarships to public school students.

The program makes it possible for families to access private schools that they otherwise may not be able to afford. Scholarships are capped by law at no more than what a K-12 public school student would receive (average per-pupil spending in the state), although the scholarship disbursements are much lower on average.

Because eligibility only extends to students already receiving public education dollars and not current private school students, the program can be fiscally neutral (or positive!) to the state while still providing an education that better suits the individual needs of the child.

Next Steps for Georgia: Increase the Tax Credit Scholarship Cap

As of 2023, Georgia's Tax Credit Scholarship program takes donations up to \$120 million and caps scholarship amounts at \$12,140.²¹ However, the program has attracted donations above and beyond its current cap, indicating an increased demand on the part of the community and corporations to provide more assistance to students through this funding mechanism. Georgia's General Assembly can increase the effectiveness and impact of the Tax Credit Scholarship Program by raising the program cap to \$200 million.

Tax Credit Scholarship Program Facts (2021)²²

- Scholarships distributed: 17,440
- Students eligible statewide: 89%
- Organizations awarding scholarships: 22
- Average scholarship amount: \$4,292

Student Eligibility Requirements

- Available to students statewide.
- Must be a Georgia resident.
- Eligible to enroll in a qualified first grade, kindergarten, or pre-kindergarten program

²¹ <https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Documents/SSO%20Cap.pdf>
²² <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/programs/georgia-qualified-education-expense-tax-credit/>

or enrolled in and attending (for at least six weeks) a Georgia secondary or primary public school. Waivers are available for students assigned to low-performing schools, students who have suffered from school-based physical or verbal abuse, and students previously enrolled in a home study program.

- No family income limit.
- No enrollment cap.

School Options

Any private school that meets the following criteria:

- Accredited or in the process of becoming accredited.
- Located in Georgia.
- Adheres to the provision of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- Satisfies the requirements prescribed by law for private schools in Georgia.
- Accepts tax credit scholarships from an approved SSO.

Scholarship Amount

SSOs and private schools determine scholarship amounts. The maximum scholarship in any given year cannot exceed the average state and local expenditures per student in public elementary and secondary education.

- Average scholarship amount in 2021: \$4,292
- Maximum amount allowed for 2023: \$12,140
- On average, tax credit scholarship recipients receive 38% of the average amount the state spends per public school student (\$11,203).

Program Funding

Because eligibility only extends to students already receiving public education dollars and not current private school students, the program can be fiscally neutral (or positive!) to the state while still providing an education that better suits the individual needs of the child.

Costs to Families

Scholarship funds can only be used for private school tuition and fees. Transportation is the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Special Needs Scholarship Program

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO A LIMITED NUMBER OF GEORGIA STUDENTS

What is the Special Needs Scholarship Program?

In 2007, the Georgia General Assembly created the Special Needs Scholarship Program, which allows students with special education needs to choose the public or private school that best meets their unique needs. In the event that a parent chooses a private school, they receive a scholarship equivalent to the amount their child would have received for state-based services.

Since being established, the program has grown from 899 participating students to over 5,000.²³

Special Needs Scholarship Program Facts (2020-2021)²⁴:

- Students participating: 5,303
- Students eligible statewide: 12%
- Schools participating: 256
- Average scholarship amount: \$6,473
- Range of annual scholarships: \$2,487 to \$14,587

Student Eligibility Requirements

- Available statewide to students with special needs. Does not include preschool or homeschool students.
- Attended public school for at least one year. This requirement may be waived for military dependents, students adopted or placed in permanent guardianship from foster care, or students with a medical or behavioral need.
- Has received special education services through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan at any point in the year.
- No family income limit.
- No enrollment cap.

School Options

- Another public school within the student's district of residence that has available space.
- Another public school district outside the student's district of residence that has available space.
- A private school authorized to participate in the program.
- One of the three state schools for the blind or deaf.

School Eligibility

The Georgia Department of Education approves all participating private schools. To be

²³
²⁴

<https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/programs/georgia-special-needs-scholarship-program/>
<https://gosa.georgia.gov/document/document/gsns-fy21-eoy-final-reportpdf/download>

approved, schools must meet the following criteria:

- Accredited or provisionally accredited or in the process of receiving its accreditation.
- Physically located in the state of Georgia, students physically attend classes and have direct contact with teachers each day. Instruction is 180 days for 4.5 hours each day *or its equivalent*. (Homeschool and virtual programs are not accepted).
- Program of instruction includes, at a minimum, the core subjects of instruction for math, science, language arts, reading, and social studies.
- One full school year of operation as a private school in Georgia (or demonstrates fiscal soundness through documentation that complies with standards established by the GaDOE and conducted by a CPA).
- Complies with relevant federal, state and local law (including 42 U.S.C. Section 2000(d), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Amendments Act of 2008) and all applicable state/local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules.
- Employs/contracts teachers who hold a baccalaureate or higher degree, or have at least three years of experience in either education or health.
- Conducts criminal background checks of teachers BEFORE teaching and maintains documentation of its background check process as well as written protocols in place for proper administrative action in the event a criminal background check or other inspection reveals criminal history after a teacher has been hired at the school.
- Administers valid and reliable pre- and post-academic assessments to scholarship students and reports results in writing to the parent(s) and the GaDOE.
- Provides clear written quarterly descriptions of academic progress to the parents of GSNS students during a school year.

Scholarship Amounts

In 2020-2021, the average Special Needs Scholarship amount was \$6,473²⁵. Scholarships may only be used for private school tuition and cover whichever is less:

- Tuition and fees of the private school.
- Amount of public school funding the student would have received in public school.

Costs to Families

- Transportation is the responsibility of the parent/guardian.
- Scholarships do not cover costs of out-of-district tuition or other public school choice options available.

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<https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/programs/georgia-special-needs-scholarship-program/>

Allow Public School Transfers Within School Districts

CURRENTLY NOT AVAILABLE IN GEORGIA

What Are Public School Transfers?

Public school transfers are an option local school systems can provide to allow parents to move their student to a different public school within their school system. This choice option is known as “intra-district transfer.” In 2009, the Georgia General Assembly passed a law requiring local school systems to make transfers available to families.

How Do Public School Transfers Work?

Parents must contact the local school system to see which schools will accept transfers and for which grades. Each school system is required to notify parents by July 1 about which schools have space. Many systems post this information on their websites before July 1.

Parents must then apply for a transfer through their district’s website, at the district office, or at the local school. If more students apply than there is space available, some school systems will make decisions on a first come, first served basis. Others will hold a random lottery.

Student Eligibility Requirements

- A student must be enrolled in a public school in Georgia.

School Options

- Another public school within the student’s district of residence that has available space in the student’s grade.
- Most districts only allow transfers at the beginning of the school year, but all can elect to accept students throughout the year.
- A student who transfers to another school may continue to attend the school until completing all grades of the school.

Costs to Families

- School systems cannot charge tuition for students transferring within their district.
- Transportation is the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

GLOSSARY

CCRPI: College and Career Ready Performance Index. This index is a yearly statewide accountability measurement for Georgia schools.²⁶ It evaluates how well schools and school districts are preparing students for college and careers by considering several factors: content mastery, student progress, student performance gaps, readiness for the next levels of education, and high school graduation rates. The CCRPI is calculated by the Georgia Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education.

Charter System. Charter Systems are not the same as charter schools. Schools within a charter system are governed by the local school board, while charter schools are governed by independent, non-profit boards. Both charter schools and charter systems emphasize school-level governance, but they are separate and distinct models, with no bearing on one another.

QBE: Quality Basic Education. This is the funding formula for Georgia's public education system. It was established in 1985 when the Georgia's General Assembly passed the Quality Basic Education Act, which created a framework for providing free basic education for Kindergarten through 12th grade.

NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress. Known as "the nation's report card," this assessment tracks American students' proficiency in math, reading, and many other subjects. NAEP assessments in math and reading are administered every two years. The NAEP serves as the most accurate way to compare student achievement across different states since the tests that states administer themselves can vary widely and do not provide reliable points of comparison.

IEP: Individualized Education Plan. This is a plan or program, provided at no cost to the family, that details the instruction, support, and services necessary for a student with special education needs. To receive an IEP, a student must have one or more of the 13 disabilities listed in the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the disability must affect the child's academic performance such that they need specialized instruction to progress in school.

504 Plan. A 504 Plan provides services and adjustments to a general learning environment so that a child with any disability can learn alongside their fellow students. This type of plan covers a variety of struggles a child may face in school. To qualify, a disability must affect the child's ability to succeed in a general education environment.

²⁶ An Overview of the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), Georgia Department of Education <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Documents/Reference%20Guides%20and%20Support%20Files/CCRPI%20Overview%20110317.pdf>

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